



# Belize - A land of Plenty

Volume 1, Issue 5

September & October 2008

## Special points of interest:

- Okra Spotlight and Fish Sere Recipe
- Calendar of Events
- Photo Page
- Letters from Home Gardeners

## Inside this issue:

- SBRC Relocates Office 2
- Rio Blanco National Park Installs Solar Power 3
- Plenty Belize Office Installs Solar System 4
- Plenty Hires New Office Manager 4
- Enterprise Engine for Toledo Approves first applications 5
- Update on Micro-Grant Program 5
- Impressions of Plenty Volunteer 5
- Plenty conducts Micro-Grant Field Visits with BRDP 6
- 17 Micro-Grant Applications Approved 8

## Back to School!

Welcome back to School! The first term of the new year started on September 1st for all primary schools across Belize.

This means that we all need to put focus on starting up our school gardens once again.

This school year Plenty plans to approach the GATE Program slightly different than previous years. We are hoping that all the involved schools will help us in making a difference this year. Please keep in mind that our aim is to make our school gardens self sustainable.

Promoting the well-being of the people, the community, and the environment we share in Toledo is Plenty's mission. To make sure the continued success of our mission we are promoting organic practices and healthy lifestyles that ensure a brighter and better future for Toledo.

This year Plenty will continue our longstanding events and some of the more recently added ones too. We are very excited to announce our 2nd Home Garden Contest for all primary school students in the Toledo District, more information will be available soon. Our organic gardening workshops during Christmas and Easter break will be happening too.

One more exciting piece of news; the GATE Program is now being coordinated by Mr. Abib Palma. Mr. Palma will continue working with schools in addition to his new duty as Program Coordinator. Mr. Ermain Requena and Plenty's Peace Corps Volunteer Mr. Mike McGuire will continue their roles as Field Extension Officers during this school year too.

Plenty is very excited about the new school year and anxious to



**Abib Palma, Ermain Requena, and Mike McGuire: The Plenty Field Extensionists**

begin working with all of you. We look forward to seeing everyone soon!

## Plenty to assist with SPEAR/TOLCA assessment

Plenty Belize is proud to be an active member of the Program for Toledo Children and Adolescents (TOLCA). TOLCA is a network of 14 organizations (both government and non-government) that are concerned with women, children, and adolescents in our district. Through TOLCA, member

agencies have assisted with school gardens, nutrition training, parenting training, women's leadership development, school playgrounds, school toilets and wash stations, hygiene training, pre-schools, and much more.

TOLCA recently signed an Memorandum Of Understanding with the Society for the Promotion of Education and Research

(SPEAR) to conduct an assessment of all registered villages in Toledo.

This assessment will help villages, TOLCA members, and others to have the data needed to effectively plan and implement projects that will make a difference in the lives of our people in years to come.



**SBRC Manager Tasha Petillo meets with University of Belize Business Professor Gilroy Middleton in the new SBRC office located on Jose Maria Nunez St.**

## SBRC relocates to Plenty's office on Jose Maria Nunez St.

The Small Business Resource Center (SBRC) has relocated their office to Jose Maria Nunez Street. Our new phone number is 662-3353.

During August two planning classes have been held with great participation from applicants.

The SBRC also conducted the first of six book keeping classes for the recipients of Micro-Grants. Accountant Max Lewis along with Peace Corps Volunteer Nadov Sim assisted SBRC Manager Tasha Petillo and

Plenty's Peace Corps Volunteer Mike McGuire in designing and facilitating the book keeping trainings.

On August 29th the SBRC held an open house to inform individuals from different organizations in Toledo of the services offered by the SBRC.

SBRC Manager Tasha Petillo said the following about the open house; "It was a great evening and I'd like to thank all those who attended. SBRC had the chance to open its doors to these organizations and intro-

duce all of its work. We all realized that we are all working towards one goal of helping the people of Toledo District."

The SBRC continues its work and would like to encourage people to continue visit the center and see how we can help you improve your business and meet all of your business needs.

The SBRC is open from 8:00am until 5:00pm Monday through Friday, closed for lunch between noon and 1:30pm.

**"Okra is particularly high in Vitamin B6, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, and Magnesium"**

Okra is a flowering plant in the Mallow family (just like cacao!) that is valued for its green fingerlike fruits. Okra has the potential to improve nutrition, boost food security, foster rural development, and support sustainable land care. Easy to grow, with no need for chemicals, and very nutritious!

Okra is particularly high in Vitamin B6, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, and Magnesium, among others. Okra is nearly half soluble

fiber in the form of gums and pectin's. Soluble fiber helps to lower serum cholesterol, reducing the risk of heart disease. The other half is insoluble fiber which helps to keep the intestinal tract healthy decreasing the risk of some forms of cancer, especially colon cancer.

Plant seeds about 1 inch deep, about 1 – 2 feet apart. Weed around the plants, especially when young. There are two potential pests that attack okra

– aphids and cabbage worms. With careful observation, these can be noted and dealt with. Aphids will die from a direct spray of soapy water. Cabbage worms are easy to hand pick, but a home-made organic spray can also be used. Okra should not be planted next to tomatoes.

Okra – easy to grow, great to eat, a great crop and food for the people of Toledo!

## Mouth watering Fish Sere

The Fish Sere has lots of vitamins, potassium, folic acid, and low in bad cholesterol.

### Ingredients:

- 6 piece fish
- 1 coconut, grated
- 3-4 culantro leaves, cut into small pieces
- 1 sweet pepper, chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 3 garlic plugs, minced

- 1 onion, chopped
- 5+ okra, sliced
- 1 pack consume
- Seasonall, salt, and pepper to taste
- 4 cups warm water

### Directions:

1. Clean fish with lime juice & vinegar. Core fish and add salt
2. Grate coconut and squeeze

grated coconut with warm water to get coconut milk. Put milk into large pot.

3. Add tomato, sweet pepper, onion, okra, culantro, black pepper, garlic, consume, and seasonall to pot and bring to boil.
  4. Once boiling add fish and cook for 10-15 minutes
- Serve with rice and salad or vegetables. Makes 12 servings



**Delicious Fish Sere, healthy and easy to make!**

## Rio Blanco National Park receives Solar System

On Wednesday August 27th Plenty Belize staff Mark Miller, Abib Palma, and Peace Corps Volunteer Mike McGuire completed a solar installation at Rio Blanco National Park (RBNP) in Western Toledo District.

RBNP was able to purchase 4 85watt Kyocera Solar panels, 3 DC light fixtures, 1 DC fan, and two batteries from Plenty Belize thanks to monies received from a Protected Areas Conservation Trust (PACT) Foundation grant.

**PACT**

RBNP is also purchasing a DC refrigerator that runs on one fifth the electricity required to operate a standard refrigerator.

This solar electric system will improve the park services, by providing cold drinks, providing light to those wishing to stay in the dormitories, and providing power for the park's computer and printer..

The installation of the solar panels was completed in one day thanks to the effort and time of the RBNP Rangers and Staff.

The newly installed system could not have come at a better time, a few weeks prior two solar panels were stolen from the RBNP by unknown persons rendering their existing electrical equipment temporarily useless.

Plenty designed the system to accommodate 5 solar panels, RBNP is already working on securing the funds to purchase an additional panel to power their facility.

Keep up the good work!



**Abib Palma and RBNP Ranger installing solar panels on the visitor center roof**

# Calendar of Events

## September

Monday 1st: School Re-Opens

Monday 8th: Micro grant Planning Workshop, part 1

Wednesday 10th: St. George's Caye Day

Friday 12th: Micro grant Planning Workshop, part 2

Tuesday 16th: European Union Evaluator visits Toledo

Wednesday 17th: EU Evaluator completes tour of Toledo

Friday 19th: Children's Rally

Saturday 20th: Bring in Independence, with rally and music at PG Central Park. Drinks available in front of Scotia Bank from Rotary Club of Punta Gorda

Sunday 21st: Independence Day, See the Plenty Float in the parade in PG Town, starting from 9:30 am!

Monday 22nd: Independence Day Holiday (no School)

Thursday 25th: Meeting at Plenty office of organizations interested in promoting home gardens or back-a-yard gardens in PG

Monday 29th: Basic Bookkeeping Workshop, part 1

## October

### *Domestic Violence Awareness Month*

Friday 3rd: Basic Bookkeeping Workshop, part 2

Friday 3rd through Sunday 5th: WIN retreat to review recent evaluation and make changes in structure to facilitate work for women's issues throughout Belize

Sunday 12th: Pan American Day

Monday 13th: Pan American Day Holiday (no School)

Thursday 16th: World Food Day

Friday 17th: International Day for Eradication of Poverty

## November

Saturday 1st: International Project Managers Day

Wednesday 19th: World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse

Wednesday 19th: Garifuna Settlement Day

Thursday 20th: Children's Day

Tuesday 25th: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women



Plenty Belize's newly installed solar panels. Bringing sustainability to our office

***“Whenever BEL power is off, our battery based system automatically provides AC power to our computers, fans, and lights”***

## **Our Office Runs even when BEL won't!**

Plagued by problems stemming from the all too frequent power outages of BEL's customers, Plenty Belize decided to take action so we can work efficiently and save time and money. Plenty installed a solar powered back-up system at our office on Jose Maria Nunez Street. Whenever BEL power is off, our battery based system automatically provides AC power to our computers, fans, and lights.

The heart of the system is a Magnum Energy ME2012 backup inverter. This allows the four circuits with our computers, fans, and lights to run seamlessly off of either BEL or the solar powered battery bank. We also installed RENCO batteries, a Prostar Charge Controller, and five Kyocera 85Watt solar panels, along with appropriate wiring, fusing, circuit breakers, etc.

While the system may save Plenty a few dollars every month, its main advantage is the availability of power whenever it is needed. The Plenty office can run at full speed for 9 hours of BEL power outage. No more loss of files when the computer shuts down. No more equipment maintenance problems stemming from repeated outages. No more wasted time while staff waits for the power to return. As one staff member remarked during a time when BEL power was out, “Fah real! Da powa is out in town? I neva know!”

According to Executive Director Mark Miller, “This solar power system, valued at BZ\$15,000, is a significant and important investment for Plenty Belize. We have long been promoting solar power for remote communities where BEL is not available. Given the recent decrease in power availability from BEL, we believe it is time to also promote solar power for electric generation across the country. Ideally, GOB would pass a law requiring BEL to set up net-metering. But in the absence of that, solar power back-up systems such as we are demonstrating and using here can play an important role in developing our economy.”

Feel free to contact Plenty Belize to learn more about solar power options in Belize.

Solar Power — good for people , communities and the environment!



**Ms. Carla Selgado,  
Plenty Belize's new  
Office Manager.**

## **Plenty Belize hires a new Office Manager**

Hi my name is Carla Selgado. I was born in Punta Gorda Town precisely on October 7<sup>th</sup> 1988 2.00a.m. I am nineteen years old.

I completed my associate degree in Business Administration in December 2007. I am also currently pursuing my Bachelor's Degree in the aforementioned field of study.

Some of my hobbies include playing pool, swimming

(mainly in rivers), traveling, and spending time with my close friends.

I would say that I am a very friendly individual who is very caring and considerate. I am also patient and honest. I like being around fun and outgoing people.

Presently, I am the new Office Manager for Plenty Belize; some of my duties include carrying out daily accounting

transactions and office management.

I look forward to a prospering relationship with my new co-workers and working with Plenty Belize.

A big welcome to Carla as she joins the Plenty Belize team!

## An Enterprise Engine for Toledo approves three groups for business plans

August 26th, 2008 three groups were approved by the executive committee (made up of Toledo Teachers Credit Union, Sustainable Harvest International, and Plenty Belize) to acquire a business plan which will determine if they will qualify for grant funding.

The three applications are:

### Hinchosonez Rice Huller Group

A women's group consisting of ten women from the Village of Santa Theresa. They intend to operate the first Rice Huller in

that branch of the Toledo District to serve their community and all the surrounding communities.

### Fajina Maya Crafts & Foods

A women's group consisting of ten women from various villages in Toledo who are already operating a Craft Center in Punta Gorda Town and are seeking funding to establish a restaurant by the Craft Center which would provide traditional local dishes.

### San Pedro Columbia Pig Raising Cooperative

A group made up of six men from San Pedro Columbia Village. They intend to raise pigs for commercial purposes and open the first meat shop in the village to serve their community and surrounding areas.

Applications are still being accepting from interested groups. The second review of applications will take place in mid October. Interested groups are urged to visit the office for more guidance on how to apply for a grant.



The Enterprise Engine for Toledo office is located on the corner of Queen St. and Front St.

## Micro-Grant Update

Since the inception of the Micro Grant for Poor Families Program in May of this year Plenty Belize has received over 100 applications for the 60 available grants.

Five workshops, focusing on the planning of micro-enterprises, have been held thus far. An additional three planning workshops are scheduled during the upcoming months.

In August Plenty, working with the Small Business Resource Center (SBRC), conducted a two day training class on basic book-keeping.

The class focused on the principles of proper book-keeping, inventory, and capital expenses. Eight recipients of micro-grants attended the training.

The book-keeping class was the first of six that will be offered to all the grant recipients. In the coming months training

classes focusing on Marketing and Savings & Loans will be offered conducted as well.

Due to the overwhelming response from Toledo residents Plenty is only accepting grant applications from single parents, persons with disabilities, and persons living with and supporting persons with disabilities.

Please contact Plenty Belize for more details.

*“The class focused on the principles of proper book-keeping, inventory, and capital expenses. Eight recipients of micro-grants attended the training”*

## The experiences of Plenty volunteer Udelia Che

My name is Udelia Che; I was born on the 29 of March 1985. I attended Primary School here in Punta Gorda Town and I completed my High School education at Claver College Extension.

Currently I am volunteering at Plenty Belize. I have learned a lot over the past few months here at Plenty. I have been learning a lot; how to interact with people in a business environment, I have been working

with the Micro-Grant program administration, and a little bit of everything else that Plenty does including gardening at different schools.

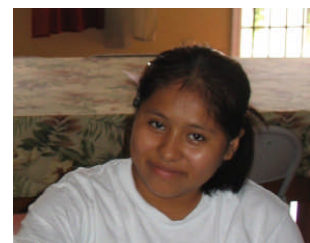
I have recently started working with St. Benedict Roman Catholic School, helping the children learn about gardens.

I will be planting flowers along with the Infant so that they can gain knowledge and the practical experience in the garden.

The older divisions will focus on local crops and tress. So far we have been cleaning the garden with the children.

In two weeks we will be starting our beds with the older kids. The flowers garden will be planted by the Infant 1 & 2. The children show a lot of interest in the project and having their school look good.

So far my time here at Plenty has been great.



Udelia Che, Plenty Volunteer and resident of Punta Gorda Town



**Ms. Ruth Duncan of Forest Home Village. Ms. Ruth received a stove from the Micro-Grant program to expand her baking business.**

### BRDP Conducts Micro-Grant Review with Plenty's Assistance

Officials of Belize Rural Development Program (BRDP) came to the Toledo District to conduct monitoring and evaluation visits with the recipients of previous and present micro-grants which were used to fund micro-enterprises, with funding from the European Union. Plenty Belize has been disbursing these micro-grants within the Toledo district since May of 2007.

The two days activity gave them an opportunity to visit approximately 85% of the recipients of the first round of funding (May-September 2007),

all the present micro-grant projects being implemented were also visited. The field visit was led by Plenty's micro grant field officer, Mr. Ermain Requena. During the visits the BRDP representatives were impressed with the level of success of these projects, and the impact that the projects have had on the lives of these poor people.

One of the projects that BRDP was most impressed with was one of the previous recipients, Miss Fabiana Sho of Santa Cruz village. Her project is local chicken rearing. Miss Sho re-

ceived some fencing materials and 10 local chickens to begin her business. This was approximately one year ago and presently she has 75 chickens roaming in her yard. She has been supplying her community with local chicken and eggs. This is the main source of income for her family.

After completing all the field visits Plenty staff met with BRDP. BRDP congratulated Plenty Belize for all of the hard work that we have been doing with the micro grants.

### Letters from Student Gardeners

Village: Aguacate Village

13/8/2008

One day I was working in my garden. When the plants are small I wet them good with water, then they are getting bigger. I get black soil to use and they are healthy. When they are good to harvest I go sell; I sell cucumber, cabbage, cilantro, Chinese cabbage, sweet pepper, hot pepper, okra, potatoes, papaya, pumpkin, calaloo, corn, string beans, culantro, and onion. I have made over \$100 by selling my vegetables.

Its very hard to do gardening. First I search for a place. Second circle it with chicken wire. Third chop inside it. Forth I dig the beds. Fifth I plant seeds in the beds. Sixth wet the seeds every morning. Seventh they grow. Eight harvest the fruits. Ninth sell the fruits.

Done By: Jenaro Tush

Forest Home Village

19/8/2008\

On March 20th, 2008 I had started working with Plenty Belize to do gardening along with Mr. Palma. Mr. Palma is encouraging me in taking care of my garden. On April 7th, I sowed cabbage, cucumber, sweet pepper, yard bean, yampi, tomato, watermelon, and red onion. I have made \$75.00 profit from selling these crops. I have kept \$25.00 for myself and the rest was used to pay the water bill. I have more to harvest soon. I am looking forward to extending my garden more.

Done By: Patricia Tush



**Aguacate Village Home Gardeners:**

**back row from left to right: Felicia, Normalinda, and Diana**

**Front row from left to right: Jenaro and William**

**Patricia and her two younger sisters**



# The Plenty Belize Photo Page



The Plenty Belize Shade Cloth Nursery, stop by and pick up some plants



Participants of the fourth Planning your Micro-Enterprise class



Felicia of Aguacate Village working in her home garden



PG Methodist Students working hard in the school Garden



Mr. Javier of Yemri Grove received a Micro-Grant from the European Union in 2007



A San Felipe Student hard chopping the school garden



Ms. Elizabeth of Serro Hill with her new fridge purchased through the Micro-Grant Program



The new Plenty Belize and SBRC sign

## PLENTY BELIZE

PO Box 72  
Jose Maria Nunez Street  
Punta Gorda Town  
Toledo District

Phone: 501-722-2198  
Fax: 501-722-2198  
Email: plentybz@btl.net

Check us out online at  
[www.plentybelize.wordpress.com](http://www.plentybelize.wordpress.com)

# Plenty Belize

**Mission: Promoting the well-being of the people, the communities, and the environment we share in the Toledo District of Belize**

**Plenty Belize is a registered Belizean NGO with its office in Punta Gorda Town. Founded in 1997 Plenty Belize has a history of working hand in hand with other local groups to address local needs in a sustainable manner. Plenty Belize has acted both as a service provider within projects spearheaded by other organizations and as a project manager.**

## 17 Applicants approved to receive Micro-Grants

Plenty's Review Committee for Toledo's Micro-grants program met on Tuesday the 9th of September to review the business plans of applicants who have already attended one of the 2-day Planning Your Micro-Enterprise in Toledo courses organized by the Small Business Resource Center.

In all 17 people from rural Toledo were approved to receive grants averaging BZ\$1,060 to assist them in starting or expanding a small home business.

Examples of businesses approved include: fishing, tree nursery, pig rearing, local



**Dr. Palacio and Mr. Budna of the DDC reviewing Micro-Grant applications at the Plenty Belize office**

ice cream shop.

A special thanks goes to the European Union for funding this program, to Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technologies (BEST) as our partner in the program, and to the Government of Belize and BRDP for their technical assistance.



chicken rearing, restaurant, grocery shop, snack shop, and